

Support Equal Pay for Equal Work Cosponsor the “Paycheck Fairness Act”

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 was an important step forward for women. It gave women a real chance to be full, equal participants in the workforce and to earn equal pay for equal work. Then, in 2009, we took an important step with the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which kept the courthouse door open to sue for pay discrimination. These have been important achievements in the struggle for equal pay.

But although the wage gap has narrowed in nearly 50 years since the passage of the Equal Pay Act, gender-based wage discrimination remains a serious problem for women in the U.S. workplace and it has very real implications for their families. Although women make up nearly half of today’s workforce, women still earn only about 77 percent of what men earn. Women of color are worse off. African American women make 71 cents on the dollar compared to the highest earners, while Hispanic women make only 60 cents. The disparity exists at all levels of education and occupation. The effect is felt even deeper in female headed households, which are much more likely to be low-income.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is a common-sense solution that builds on the promise of the Equal Pay Act and helps close the pay gap. The bill takes critical steps to empower women to negotiate for equal pay, to close loopholes that courts have created in the law, to create strong incentives for employers to obey the laws that are in place, and to strengthen federal outreach and enforcement efforts. Specifically, the bill would:

- **Clarify the ‘any factor other than sex’ defense** so that an employer trying to justify paying a man more than a woman for the same job must show that the disparity is not sex-based; is job related and is necessary for the business.
- **Prohibit employers from retaliating** against employees who discuss or disclose salary information with their co-workers.
- **Strengthen the remedies** available to include punitive and compensatory damages. Under the EPA currently, plaintiffs can only recover back pay or, in some cases, double back pay. The bill would ensure that women can receive the same remedies for pay discrimination that are available under other laws for discrimination based on race and national origin.
- **Require the Department of Labor to improve outreach and training efforts** to work with employers in order to eliminate pay disparities.
- **Enhance the collection of information on women’s and men’s wages** in order to more fully explore the reasons for the wage gap and help employers in addressing pay disparities.
- Create a new grant program to **help strengthen the negotiation skills** of girls and women.

Please join us in standing up for women, children, and families by working to end the wage gap. To become a cosponsor or if you have questions, please contact Teri Weathers at 4-8875.